

Rocky Mtn Power urging customers to recycle fridges

JEREMY DUDA - Daily Herald Sunday, April 22, 2007

Looking to do something for the environment on Earth Day? Rocky Mountain Power has a convenient way to combat an inconvenient truth.

The power company and JACO Environmental are making it easy for people to dispose of their old, energy-hogging refrigerators. Rocky Mountain customers in Utah and Idaho can simply call a number and JACO will pick up the fridges at their homes and pay them \$40 for their troubles.

Americans replace their refrigerators about every 10 years on average, according to JACO's Michael Dunham. The old fridges often end up in people's garages and basements. The average fridge that JACO picks up is 21 years old and uses 1,500 kilowatt hours of electricity, he said.

Fridges built before 1995 not only use more power than the newer models, but they contain chemicals and components that are more harmful to the environment. Chlorofluorocarbons in the coolant, oil and insulation deplete ozone and can release up to five tons of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, according to Dunham.

"The ones we're targeting and bringing in are environmental time bombs," said Dunham, who is the company's director of energy and environmental programs.

JACO has recycling centers in eight Western states and two Canadian provinces, including one in Salt Lake City. When the company recycles the old refrigerators it removes the CFC-containing components and destroys them, then strips down the rest of the materials and sells them to secondary commodities markets.

Using newer refrigerators not only helps the environment but is good for the pocketbook as well. Dunham said newer models use 75 percent less electricity than their pre-1995 counterparts, which will save about \$150 a year on power bills.

"A 20-year-old fridge costs \$200 a year to run and we will save 150 of that," Dunham said. Those old fridges represent about 20 percent of the average power bill, he said.

With an average price tag of \$500-\$700, a new fridge will pay for itself in just four or five years, Dunham said.

The recycling program started in 2003 and runs year-round. Mike Jacobsen, who manages the program's call center, said Utah County is seeing an increase in participation over last year.

"It's like every year it seems to perpetuate itself. We seem to get a little higher volume each year," he said.

According to Dunham, JACO recycles more refrigerators in Utah than anywhere else.

"We have actually recycled over 60,000 refrigerators in the last four years in Utah," he said.

This is the time of year when JACO sees a sharp increase in recycling requests by customers, not because of Earth Day but because of rising temperatures. As temperatures go up, especially garages and basements with no air conditioning, the fridges use more power.

"When you have a refrigerator in your garage or basement and it gets hot outside, that thing has to work harder," Dunham said. "Come summer, it's going to be working 24-7 to keep it at the temperature you need it."

To have JACO pick up your old refrigerator, call 1-866-899-5539.

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